MARVEL COMICS
GHOST RIDER
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BEWARE
WAREWOLF!
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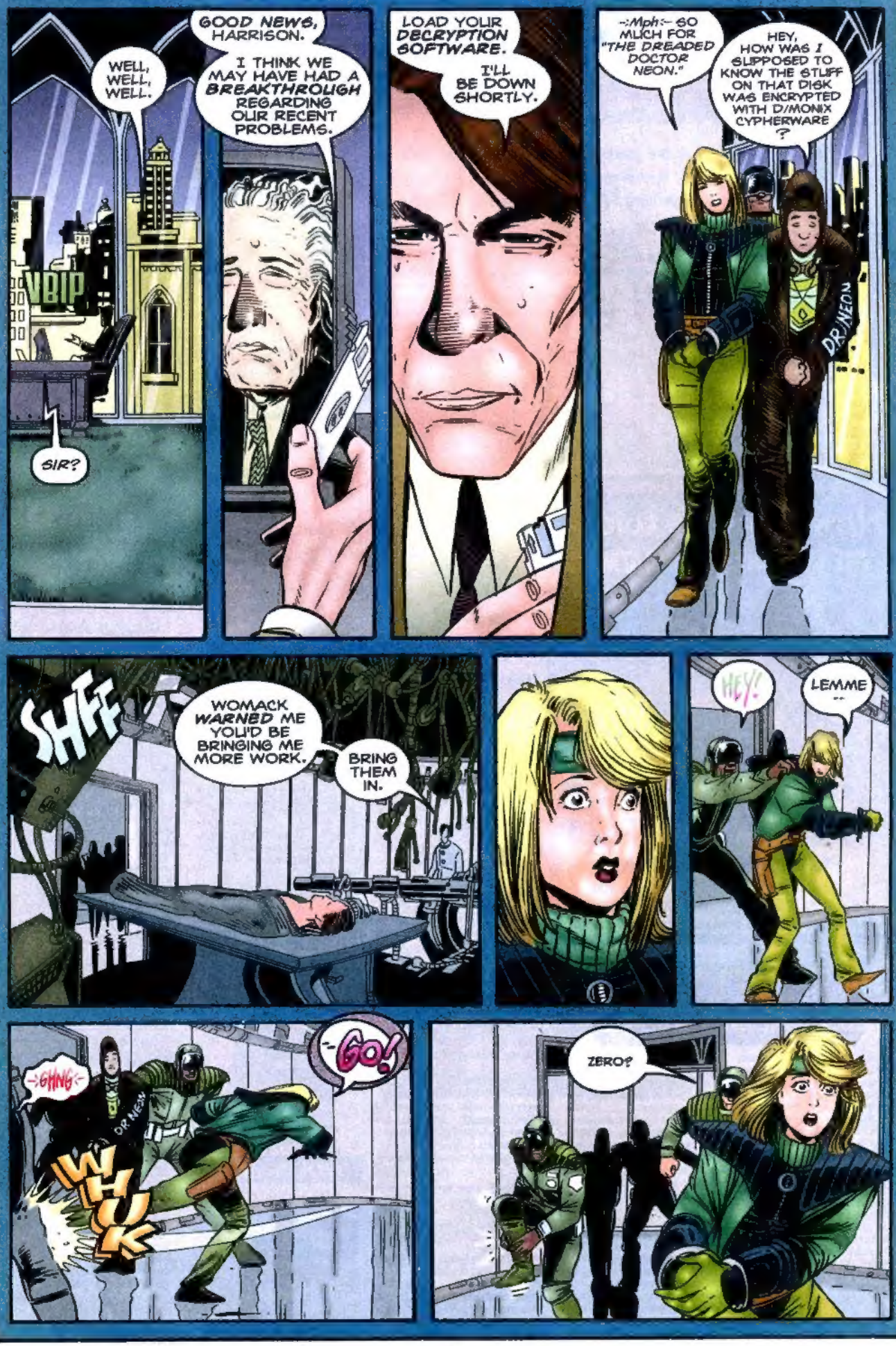
TARGET EXTERIOR: HOLOGRAPHICALLY-CONFIGURED TACTILE FEEDBACK FIELD
SKRAPTCH
PURPOSE: CAMOUFLAGE
WAREWOLF?
YOU STILL IN THERE, MAN?
TALK TO ME!
DISREGARD VERBAL INPUT
I...
CONTENT IRRELEVANT
KRULTCH

RRKCH
JAMMIT!
I DUNNO WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU, OR HOW --
-- BUT ONE THING I DO KNOW --
VAAT SCHKT
-- I DON'T LAY DOWN AND DIE --
TARGET STATUS CHANGE. DEPLOYING TO FULL COMBAT MODE
ZZCLAMP
CHAK

SHRAK
-- FOR ANYBODY!
...HUMANIFORM ANDROID PLATFORM, HOUSING DIGITIZED MENTALITY OF --
ANALYZING TARGET...
ZBROT
CAN'T MAKE IT
COMMAND OVERRIDE
STOP
RESUME
SHRAAK
JUST MY SHOCKIN' LUCK.

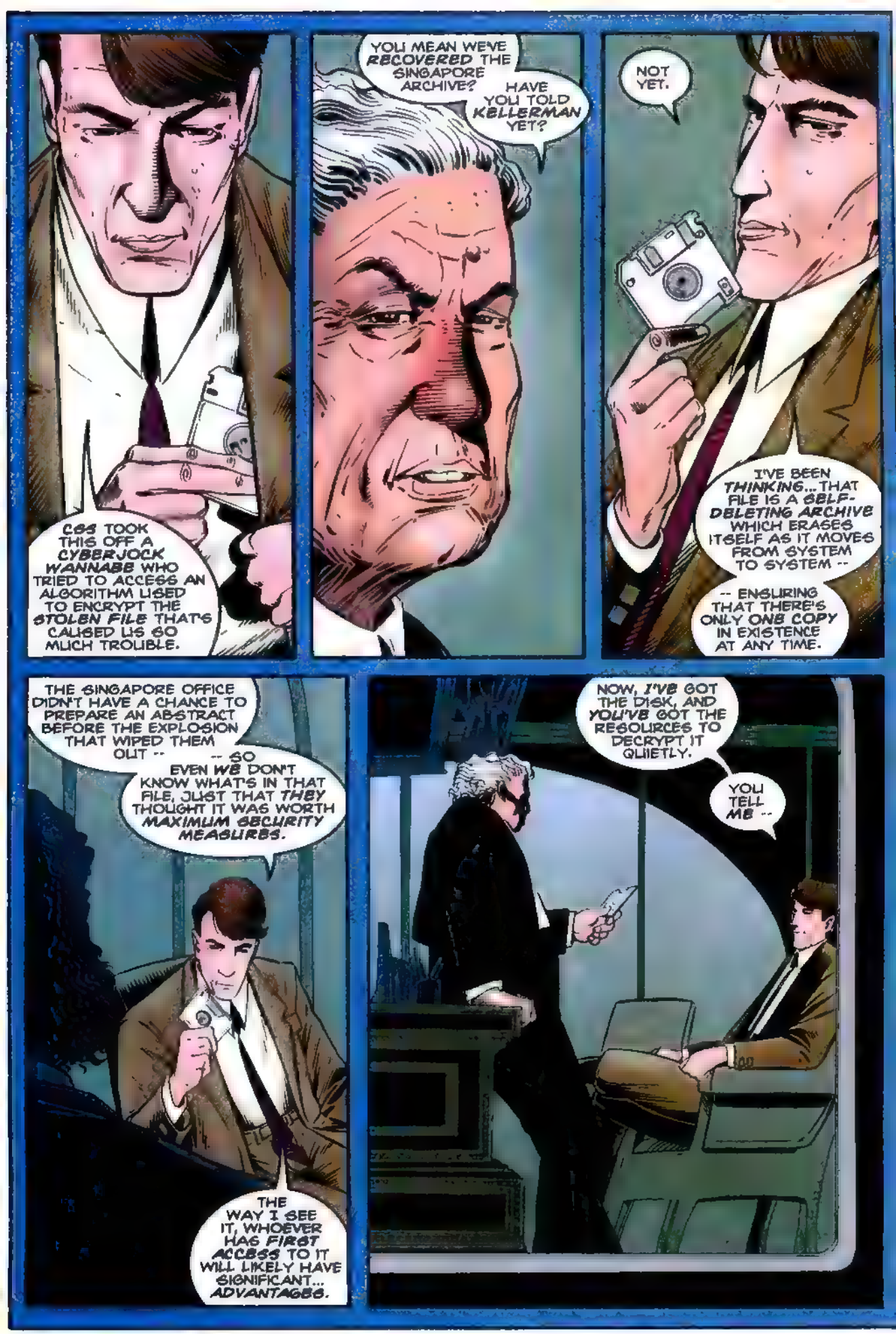
THERE'RE MORE WORTHLESS PUSBAGS IN THIS TOWN THAN I CAN COUNT --
L'MON, MAN!
NOW I KNOW YOU'RE STILL ONLINE!
-- RATBITERS I'D GREASE IN A HOT SECOND --
WAKE UP!
-- AND I GOTTA END UP RIPPIN' WITH ONE OF THE MAYBE TWO PEOPLE I GIVE A JAM ABOUT.
OPTION NO LONGER AVAILABLE
THRAKKA
NOT LIKE I'VE GOT A CLUE --

-- ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENED TO THE OTHER ONE...
JEEZ, QUIT SHOVING!
I'M GOIN' ALREADY!
NO TALKING.
Ah, GO WRECK YOURSELF.
MISTER WOMACK?
THE PERPE-TRATORS YOU WANTED TO SPEAK WITH, SIR.
YOU THE BOSS?
WHAT D'YA WANT WITH US?
INFORMATION.
YOU TRIED TO ACCESS A PROPRIETARY ALGORITHM BELONGING TO THIS COMPANY. WHY?
OH, THAT. JUST AN ACCESS CODE MIS-READ. TOTAL ACCIDENT.
WE'RE JUST A COUPLE OF STUPID KIDS, Y'KNOW?
OBVIOUSLY.
COOPERATION WOULD BE MUCH MORE INTELLIGENT.
WE FOUND THIS DISK ON THE SCENE, SIR.
Hm. I'LL HAVE IT LOOKED AT.
IN THE MEANTIME, TAKE THEM DOWN TO NEURO-TERROGATION.
I THINK WE'RE IN MAJOR TROUBLE, HERE.
YEAH? AND WHOSE FAULT IS THAT, SPUD-BOY?
I SAID NO TALKING.


WELL, WELL, WELL.
GOOD NEWS, HARRISON.
I THINK WE MAY HAVE HAD A BREAKTHROUGH REGARDING OUR RECENT PROBLEMS.
SIR?
LOAD YOUR DECRYPTION SOFTWARE.
I'LL BE DOWN SHORTLY.
-:Mph:- SO MUCH FOR "THE DREADED DOCTOR NEON."
HEY, HOW WAS I SUPPOSED TO KNOW THE STUFF ON THAT DISK WAS ENCRYPTED WITH D/MONIX CYPHERWARE?
DR. NEON
SHFF
WOMACK WARNED ME YOU'D BE BRINGING ME MORE WORK.
BRING THEM IN.
HEY!
LEMME--
-:GHNG:-
DR NEON
WHUK
GO!
ZERO?

YOU CAN'T GO AND BE DEAD ON ME!
GET HER AWAY FROM THERE!
YOU SON OF A GLITCH.
YOU STILL OWE ME MONEY!
ALL RIGHT, MISSY.
'NUFF O' THAT.
SHOCK YOU, JACK!
OW!
SHE BIT ME!
HOLD HER STILL.
NNUUGH
PUSBAG!
THE MNEMO-PROMETHYLENE WILL QUIET HER DOWN.
KWA
UHUNNGK

THERE.
WE'LL START WITH HER MEMORIES OF HER DEAD FRIEND OVER THERE.
THERE'S STILL QUITE A BIT WE DON'T KNOW ABOUT HIM.
MEANWHILE...
DISGRACEFUL.
PARDON?
MMN?
OH. JUST... THINKING OUT LOUD, SIR.
SOMETHING ABOUT OUR DEAD DATA PIRATE YOU FIND FASCINATING?
APPALLING IS MORE LIKE IT.
IT'S GUTTER TRASH LIKE THIS THAT'LL BE THE DOWNFALL OF OUR SOCIETY.
HM. YOU HAVE TO WONDER WHAT KIND OF PARENTS RAISE TRASH LIKE THAT.
UNLUCKY ONES.
BIP
YOU SAID SOMETHING ABOUT GOOD NEWS..?


CSS TOOK THIS OFF A CYBERJOCK WANNABE WHO TRIED TO ACCESS AN ALGORITHM USED TO ENCRYPT THE STOLEN FILE THAT'S CAUSED US SO MUCH TROUBLE.
YOU MEAN WE'VE RECOVERED THE SINGAPORE ARCHIVE?
HAVE YOU TOLD KELLERMAN YET?
NOT YET.
I'VE BEEN THINKING... THAT FILE IS A SELF-DELETING ARCHIVE WHICH ERASES ITSELF AS IT MOVES FROM SYSTEM TO SYSTEM --
-- ENSURING THAT THERE'S ONLY ONE COPY IN EXISTENCE AT ANY TIME.
THE SINGAPORE OFFICE DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO PREPARE AN ABSTRACT BEFORE THE EXPLOSION THAT WIPED THEM OUT --
-- SO EVEN WE DON'T KNOW WHAT'S IN THAT FILE, JUST THAT THEY THOUGHT IT WAS WORTH MAXIMUM SECURITY MEASURES.
THE WAY I SEE IT, WHOEVER HAS FIRST ACCESS TO IT WILL LIKELY HAVE SIGNIFICANT... ADVANTAGES.
NOW, I'VE GOT THE DISK, AND YOU'VE GOT THE RESOURCES TO DECRYPT IT QUIETLY.
YOU TELL ME --

-- DO YOU THINK THE OLD MAN NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT IT JUST YET?
YOU DISAPPOINT ME WOMACK
I'D THOUGHT YOUR AMBITION WAS LEASHED BY COMMON SENSE
OR DO YOU ACTUALLY BELIEVE YOU COULD TEACH ME TO CRUNCH NUMBERS?
INPUT FLAG
PRELIMINARY ANALYSIS OF MODIFIED VEHICLE CONFISCATED BY CSS
PROCESSING...
MAGNIFICENT
EASILY HALF A DOZEN UNKNOWN NEW TECHNOLOGIES.
ALL OF WHICH WILL NO DOUBT HAVE TO BE PROSCRIBED.
DISSEMINATION OF SUCH POTENTIAL MEANS OF TECHNOLOGICAL INDEPENDENCE WOULD HAVE A CATASTROPHIC EFFECT ON SOCIAL ORDER.
MEDIA FILTER ACTIVATED; KEYWORD "GHOST RIDER"
THIS IS WILLIS ADAMS REPORTING LIVE AND DIRECT FROM THE STREETS OF TRANSVERSE CITY.

A BATTLE IS RAGING TONIGHT --
-- A CLASH OF TITANS BETWEEN THE MYSTERIOUS OUTLAW KNOWN AS THE GHOST RIDER --
-- AND AN EVEN MORE TERRIFYING NEW MENACE.
CSS SPECIAL-FORCES UNITS, HAVING ALREADY ENGAGED THE GHOST RIDER IN ONE INCONCLUSIVE BATTLE EARLIER --
-- ARE REPORTEDLY EN ROUTE TO THE SCENE OF THE CARNAGE.
WHETHER THEY CAN DEALWITH THIS SITUATION, HOWEVER --
-- REMAINS TO BE SEEN.
SKRAPTCH
THRAKA
CHAK!!

TARGET SUBDUED; PREDICTED MISSION COMPLETION IN 07 SECONDS...
WHRUK
YOU WISH.
C'MON, WAREWOLF! WAKE THE SHOCK UP!
GET A GRIP--
-- BEFORE I HAFTA HURT YOU!
GOT...
...NO CHOICE...

CAN'T STOP COMMAND OVERRIDE PROGRAMMING IN MY HEADS GONNA MAKE ME KILL YOU IF YOU DON'T DO ME FIRST.
FIGHT IT, MAN. HANG ON.
TELL ME WHAT HAP-PENED.
INFECTED ME
GENOME-WIDE DNA RESEQUENCING
SOME KINDA EXPERIMENTAL NANOTECH.
MESSED WITH MY
DEEP STRUCTURE PROGRAMMING AND SYSTEMIC OVERRIDE TRIGGER
MIND.
NOT HUMAN ANYMORE.
MADE ME A ROBOT
PLEASE.
KILL ME!
I DON'T WANNA LIVE LIKE THIS!
I...
...MAN, I CAN'T...
SHRAKAKOOM

ATAC UNIT LEADER TO CENTRAL COMMAND -- WE HAVE PERPETRATOR ACQUISITION.
MOVING TO ENGAGE.
YOU BIT-HEADS AGAIN?
CAN'T YOU SEE I'M BUSY?!
SKAAM
KRUK
AAUGH
SHAKRAK
THRAKAKAKAK
DIMARCO! I NEED BACK-UP!
MISSION OBJECTIVE IN JEOPARDY
REMOVING OBSTRUCTIONS

AUGH
SKRUTCH
RODRIGUEZ -- ! HOLY GLITCH!
TAKE THEM BOTH DOWN -- FAST!
CHOOM CHOOM
LEAVE HIM ALONE!
TARGET RE-ENGAGED
RESUMING PRIMARY DIRECTIVE
OH, GREAT
>ANTIPARTICLE GENERATOR CYCLE COMPLETE
>TARGETING...

WARE-WOLF, WE GOTTA
TOO LATE, MAN.
YOU SHOULDA LISTENED.
THAK
NEVER DID KNOW
WHAT'S GOOD FOR YOU!
CHAKKA
THOM
NEGATIVE VISIBILITY.
HOLD YOUR POSITIONS UNTIL THE SMOKE CLEARS.

AW, NO...
DON'T...
BETTER... THIS WAY ZEROMAN.
'LEAST I'M FREE...
. AND THE RATBITERS... LOSE.
HAMMIT, IT'S NOT FAIR!
WHO DID THIS TO YOU?
D
MONIX
WO.. MACK
AND HAR
HARR. ISSSSS
ISS
HARRISON !?!
KA THAAK

IT NEVER ENDS!
NO MORE SCREWING AROUND.
I'M COMIN' FOR YOU, OLD MAN.
AND WHEN I FIND YOU...
DON'T EVEN TWITCH, CHROME JOB.
WE TOOK YOU DOWN ONCE ALREADY.

WHAT, D'YOU THINK I'D FORGET?
FAT CHANCE.
THRRRRMMM
OPTIC LASER SELECTED >SCAN MODE MAPPING TARGET
AIO
RECALIBRATING BEAM INTENSITY >ASSAULT MODE
ZZSHAKK
SPAKASSH

PAYBACK'S BURNED INTO ROM.
BARGE!
YOU'D BETTER E-MAIL THE BODY BANKS.
SHCCT
SHAK
VARR
CHAKLAK
KLIK
CHIK
TELL 'EM TO GET READY --

KTHR VRRRRRR
-- FOR RUSH HOUR.
NEXT: BRUTAL YOUTH!

GHOST RIDER 2099

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All correspondence must include your name and address, though we will withhold that information at your request.

STRAIGHT FROM EVAN

Normally, this would be the place wherein we printed the choicest letters we received from you, our rabid readers, regarding GHOST RIDER 2099 #1. However, since those very letters contained so many urgent requests for more information on the language and history of Transverse City, we've decided to cave in quickly to your demands *before* things get ugly.

Worry not; we'll get to your letters next issue, on a proper letters page with a proper letters page title. So keep writing!

In the meantime, get yourself out of read-only mode and vid this little walk through Transverse City. Steer clear of CSS blackboots, ramp up your attitude, and you should find it a pretty jagged trip.

A TOURIST'S GUIDE TO TRANSVERSE CITY

by Len Kaminski

HISTORY

TRANSVERSE CITY is a huge industrialized urban sprawl that stretches between Detroit and Chicago. Originally designed as the center starting point of an ambitious transcontinental traffic construct begun in 2034, the bulk of Transverse City is a ten-story, twenty-lane superhighway.

An ill-fated — and some say ill-advised — project, the transcontinental superhighway was never to be realized; a series of massive cost overruns, combined with entrenched corporate corruption, proved a fatal blow to the contractor, Interstate Incorporated, twelve years into construction. Local legend has it that the suicide note of I.I.'s CEO, who took his own life shortly after his company was forced into bankruptcy, read simply, "It seemed like a good idea at the time."

The only section actually completed, spanning the Chicago/Detroit axis, was nonetheless pressed into service for both private and commercial traffic.

With local traffic unable to even approach the construct's massive capacity, and with creditors nipping at I.I.'s tattered heels, the superhighway — soon to become known as Transverse ("from here to there") City — rapidly degenerated into a nightmare of social ecology gone awry, as various levels and sections were parceled out to a hodgepodge of secondary developers.

The upper levels quickly came to represent socio-economic status, by and for those of the upper classes who either preferred ground-based vehicular travel, or who weren't quite wealthy enough to have their own private aircraft.

Meanwhile, the lower levels were left to become the habitat of millions of squatters and refugees of the permanent underclasses. And serving as a sort of buffer zone between these two extremes, middle-class housing complexes, shopping malls and the like were constructed on levels four through seven.

Over the years, various other developments have sprung up around Transverse City itself, creating an overdeveloped carpet of apartment complexes, fast-food joints, strip malls, and so on, clinging to and spreading out from the superhighway — like a fungus — for several miles to either side.

PREVAILING CONDITIONS

The two endpoints of Transverse City, Chicago and Detroit, are polar extremes. Chicago is a bustling metropolis engaged in making a comeback from the social and economic unrest of the mid-century, doggedly pursuing Alchemax's New York as a model of 22nd Century urban planning, though so far without total success.

Detroit, on the other hand, is a Designated Toxification Zone, a heavily industrialized manufacturing center where ecological concerns have been thrown out the window in their entirety; it's a polluted hellhole twenty-five miles in diameter, inhabited only by automated factories and refineries with skeleton crews of humans either cybernetically modified to withstand the environment, or clothed in extensive protective pressure-suits. A variety of technological means have been employed to contain the deadly by-products of industry to that 25-mile area, including an electrostatic field dome that prevents Detroit's atmosphere from mingling with the rest of the world's.

Unlike the New York area, Transverse City and its surrounding regions are not owned and operated by a single transnational like Alchemax, but instead have been divided piecemeal amongst dozens of lesser corporations. These companies — all of whom are constantly jockeying for dominance over the others in ongoing squabbles over territorial and financial issues — have established URBAN MANAGEMENT (or, "UrMan") to administer and operate the day-to-day municipal functions of Transverse City. UrMan, in turn, has contracted law-enforcement and corporate security duties out to CENTRAL SECURITY SYSTEMS (also known simply as "CSS").

CSS considers itself to have a broader mandate than other private police forces like Alchemax's Public Eye; CSS doesn't so much provide justice for payment as they attempt to impose order of a particularly inflexible kind. Even with their fascist tactics, however, Transverse City is far too large and lawless for them to maintain a uniformity of order, and the lower levels in particular can make 42nd Street look like Disneyland.

The most powerful corporate player in Transverse City — far more powerful than most people are aware — is Data Manipulation and Organization Networks, a.k.a. D/MONIX. Its corporate philosophy, as laid out by founder and CEO Dyson Kellerman, is that ownership of property and overt temporal power is irrelevant if one controls the flow and interpretation of information itself; that pre-eminence is to be achieved not by controlling land or public behavior, but by controlling and manipulating what people — including heads of rival companies — think.

Because of the deep hooks D/MONIX has sunk into UrMan, CSS and virtually every other company in Transverse City, they are the *de facto* decision-makers of the entire region. Very little of any consequence happens in Transverse City that D/MONIX doesn't instigate or have a hand in, even though very, very few people — including most D/MONIX executives — are actually aware of this fact.

LOCAL LINGO/TECH TALK

BIT-HEAD — A very stupid person.

BIZ — Derogatory general term for Big Business; variation "biz suit" used to refer to corporate executives and their ilk; also, as a shortened form of "business".

"I've got biz to settle with the biz suits."

BLACKBOOTS — Insulting term for CSS Securitcops; analogous to 20th Century usage of "pigs" in reference to police officers.

CRATER — Go horribly wrong, fail.

"That second-hand motherboard's gonna crater on you."

DECOMPILE — Think, ponder.

DIFF — Abbreviated version of "different".

DOWNRAMPER — Inhabitant of Transverse City's lower levels. Derogatory.

GLITCH — Expletive; "Holy glitch" and "Son of a glitch" are common usages.

HOTLOAD — Refers to both stealing and the stolen material itself; usually in reference to pirated computer data.

INFO-DUMP — Inform, transfer information.

"I know you're hiding something — info-dump me."

JAGGED — Cool. Shortened in the converse, as in, "Hey, that's not jag."

JAM (also JAMMIT, JAMMED) — General expletive.

MEATWARE — Human flesh; analogous to the computer terms "software" and "hardware".

PUNCH DECK — To enter cyberspace on a computer terminal or through a biochip implant.

PUSBAG — An evil and/or obnoxious person; someone you really don't like very much.

RAMPED — Enthused, as in "I'm really ramped for this job."

Variations "ramped up" or "ramped down" used to refer to increasing or decreasing the level of attitude; also, sometimes used in reference to adjustments made to machinery. "I ramped down the sarcasm and got down to business, ramping up my cyberspace deck's baud rate."

RATBITER — See PUSBAG.

READ-ONLY — Used to describe someone or something that is incapable of learning new information.

RETREAD — See RATBITER.

ROM — Permanent memory.

RIP — To get angry; also, to fight.

ROADRASH — See RETREAD.

SHOCK — Generic expletive, used as elsewhere in North America of 2099.

SKELTERED — Mixed up, beyond repair.

SPEW — General expletive.

SPUD — Man; guy. Variation "spud-boy" used derogatorily.

STALE — Obsolete, out of fashion.

SURF DATA — See PUNCH DECK.

VID — See, understand, get the point.

"Vid it this time; we're not going to tell you again."

WETWARE — The human brain; analogous to the computer terms "software" and "hardware".

ATTENTION CYBERJOCKS!

GHOST RIDER 2099 writer LEN KAMINSKI is waiting in cyberspace for your electronic mail! Deposit your digital messages for him, and he'll do his best to respond to you personally! Your E-mail may also show up here, in the GR2099 letters page!

LEN can be reached on COMPUSERVE at I.D. # 74130, 3464

See you in C-space!